



# Wisconsin Health Insurance Risk Sharing Plan (HIRSP)

Division of Health Care Financing  
Department of Health and Family Services  
6406 Bridge Road, Suite 18 • Madison, WI 53784-0018  
Customer Service: (800) 828-4777 or (608) 221-4551  
Fax: (608) 226-8770

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Wisconsin Health Insurance Risk Sharing Plan (HIRSP) Policyholders

**FROM:** HIRSP Customer Service

**SUBJECT:** HIRSP Prescription Drug Program Initiatives

The purpose of this memo is to provide you with information regarding two programs HIRSP uses to help control the rapidly rising costs of prescription drugs. These programs, called Step Care and Dose Optimization, help to ensure that medications are used in the most cost-effective and appropriate manner to improve the policyholder's health. The two letters attached to this cover memo provide more information about Step Care and Dose Optimization.

The pharmacy services team of APS Healthcare is under contract with HIRSP to provide these services in addition to other services they provide to HIRSP policyholders and pharmacy providers, including:

- Providing an easy-to-use system that allows your pharmacy claims to process quickly and accurately.
- Working with doctors and pharmacists to make sure that the drugs prescribed for you are safe, effective, and appropriate for your condition.
- Developing programs that provide your pharmacist with timely information to encourage the proper use of medication and discourage the use of inappropriate and possibly unsafe drugs or combinations of drugs.
- Introducing systems that both save costs and enhance the quality of your care.

You will receive additional information if HIRSP introduces other new programs to manage your pharmacy benefits more efficiently.

If you have questions about Step Care or Dose Optimization, you may contact the APS Healthcare Pharmacy Services Department directly at 1-800-743-4779. Please contact HIRSP Customer Service at 1-800-828-4777 for all other questions about your HIRSP coverage.



***TO: Wisconsin HIRSP Policyholders***

Your drug plan uses a program called Dose Optimization to support safe and cost-effective drug treatment. More information about this program is included below.

***Question:*** What is the Dose Optimization Program?

***Answer:*** The Dose Optimization Program is a way to ensure that the medication prescribed for you is dispensed by the pharmacist in the simplest and most economical form. For example, when one pill may be taken every day instead of two pills daily to give the same dose, this program alerts the pharmacist to dispense the drug so that you will take one pill daily.

***Question:*** Why is this program needed?

***Answer:*** Many drugs are made in a number of milligram strengths so that the needs of a variety of people can be met. In addition, for many drugs, the cost does not go up as the number of milligrams per pill goes up. For example, if you are taking two 10 mg tablets every day to equal a total dose of 20 mg, the prescription cost could be twice as much. This program lowers the health plan's drug costs, and provides benefits to the plan participants.

***Question:*** How does this program work?

***Answer:*** In a situation like the one described above, your pharmacist automatically receives a message on the computer telling them to use the more economical 20 mg tablet. The medication then is dispensed and you are given appropriate instructions for the use of the drug by the pharmacist — just like usual.

***Question:*** What benefits does this program have for me?

***Answer:*** The Dose Optimization Program offers several benefits. First, it simplifies your drug schedule. You will be taking fewer tablets per day, and you may have fewer doses per day. So, there is less chance that doses will be missed or taken incorrectly. Because the goal of this program is to reduce drug costs, your share of the prescription costs are also lower.

***Question:*** Why didn't my doctor prescribe my medication this way to begin with?

***Answer:*** There may be a number of answers to this question. Many times there are new strengths of pills of which the doctors are not aware. Other times, the doctor might have needed to raise your dose at some time, and instead of writing for a higher strength, he or she may just have instructed you to take more pills per day. For whatever reason, the Dose Optimization Program only looks for drugs that are expected to give the same results when a new dose is recommended.

***Question:*** Whom do I call if I have questions about this program?

***Answer:*** The Pharmacy Services Department of APS Healthcare (1-800-743-4779) will help answer your questions about Dose Optimization. Please contact HIRSP Customer Service at 1-800-828-4777 for all other questions about your HIRSP coverage.

***TO: Wisconsin HIRSP Policyholders***

Your drug plan uses a program called Step Care to support safe and effective drug treatment. More information about this program is included below.

***Question:*** How does the Step Care Program work?

***Answer:*** For certain prescriptions, your pharmacist and doctor are notified by the plan to try drugs that are equally effective — but possibly safer or less expensive. Drugs that should be tried first are called “first-line” therapies. If you try to fill a “second-line” drug and have not tried a first-line agent, your doctor is contacted to see if one of the first-line drugs is right for you.

***Question:*** What if I already tried another drug first?

***Answer:*** Our computer “looks back” into your medication history for first-line prescriptions. If it finds that you have used first-line drug recently, your prescription will process as usual.

***Question:*** Why does HIRSP use this program?

***Answer:*** Many older therapies are equally effective to newer drugs. In cases where two drugs are both effective for your condition, one may have fewer side effects, require less lab testing during use, or have other advantages. Also, first-line drugs are often available in generic versions, which means they are often less costly to both yourself (lower coinsurance) and the health plan. This program encourages the use of safe, well-established medications and saves money.

***Question:*** How does the Step Care Program benefit me?

***Answer:*** It continues to give you access to effective drug treatments, but at a lower cost to both yourself and the health plan.

***Question:*** Whom do I call if I have questions about this program?

***Answer:*** The Pharmacy Services Department of APS Healthcare (1-800-743-4779) will help answer your questions about the Step Care Program. Please contact HIRSP Customer Service at 1-800-828-4777 for all other questions about your HIRSP coverage.